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ABSTRACT

Four factors which affect the status of African Studies in the southeastern United States are: (1) the largeness of the South as a geographical area, (2) lack of concentrations of African-oriented scholars in the region, (3) the relatively new addition of African Studies to southern university curriculums, and (4) the frequent involvement in African Studies of persons from outside the South. Existing patterns of cooperation involve the regional disciplinary associations, interdisciplinary cooperation at the regional level, and activity at the state level. The regional association showing the highest interest in the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers while the Southern Economics Association has shown the least. Most state wide activity in African Studies is at the University of Florida African Studies Center. The current level of interest in organizing a regional association of Africanists among persons teaching about Africa in the Southeast demonstrates a marked contrast to what has taken place. In response to a survey of southeastern Africanists, 95 percent of the respondents believe that a regional organization would be of value. As a result arrangements have been made to establish this organization. The three leading priorities are the establishment of a newsletter, organization of panel discussions at regional disciplinary association meetings, and the organization of an annual meeting. (DE)

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THE PAST AND CURRENT STATUS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AMONG AFRICAN ORIENTED COLLEGE LEVEL TEACHERS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

by

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Presented at the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association
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November, 1972

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The Past and Current Status of Regional Cooperation Among African-Oriented College-Level Teachers in the Southeastern United States

Before considering the questions that were posed to the panelists, I wish to discuss two other matters that pertain to the general topic of this panel. First, there are at least four features that affect the status of African Studies in the southeastern United States. They are: (1) the South is a large geographic area; (2) there are no concentrations of African-oriented scholars and teachers in the region; but instead, those interested in Africa are spread thinly throughout the area; (3) in comparison with some other regions in the United States, African Studies forms a relatively new addition to southern university and college curriculums; (4) to a large degree, those involved in African Studies come from outside the South. None of these elements are confined exclusively to the South, but with the possible exception of the region served by the Western Association of Africanists the South is unique in the combined presence of all four features.

Secondly, in examining the role of regional associations, it is important to bear in mind the crises that have faced African Studies in the United States over the past few years. The most recent one has been a leveling off and in some instances a decline in public and institutional support. This phenomenon, of course, has been widespread throughout higher education in general. As a result of the constriction in financial support,

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there has been a competitive "scramble" within universities and colleges for funding, faculty, and even students to sustain academic programs. In this competition for resources, African Studies, because of its relative newness as an area of research and teaching and its lack of well-entrenched institutional support, has been in a relatively weak position. Yet, we in the field of African Studies can assert, and properly so, that now is not the time to limit existing programs and to stop the development of new ones. Instead, there is a continuing need for expanding still further the study of Africa at all educational levels in the United States. If we as Africanists are to achieve this objective, however, we are going to have to move in new directions as well as continuing to stress established patterns in order to acquire the necessary institutional and public support.

This workshop fits in with both of the problems that I have been discussing, for it is based on the assumption that regional organizations can provide Africanists with communication and cooperation that will overcome distance and isolation and that will be of value in coping with the crisis of shrinking resources. In order better to explore ways in which "regional organizations may help serve the needs of teachers and scholars in the field of African Studies" in the South, this paper will first survey the existing pattern of cooperation. Then, it will take up the problems influencing the possibility of closer cooperation and the contribution that a regional organization can make to solving such problems

Existing Patterns of Cooperation

The existing patterns of cooperation involve the regional disciplinary

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associations, interdisciplinary cooperation at the regional level, and activity at the state level. A cursory examination of the available annual meeting programs over the past five years for selected regional disciplinary associations reveals that they have had only a limited interest in Africa. The small amount of attention paid to Africa reflects the general level of interest among the membership of these associations and the comparatively recent addition of Africanists to the faculties of southern universities and colleges. The regional associations showing the highest degree of interest have been the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers, which has generally had one or two panels on Africa at its annual meeting; the Southern Anthropological Society, which has had at least two panels in the last five years (1970 and 1972) plus additional papers; the Southern Political Science Association, which had a panel at its 1967 meeting and papers in 1970, 1971, and 1972. The Southern Historical Association has been less active, with a panel in 1971 and a paper in 1970, while the annual meeting of the Southern Economics Association has had no papers on Africa over the past five years. The only interdisciplinary cooperation at a regional level has been an annual Conference on African and African-American Studies sponsored since 1968 by the Center for African and African-American Studies at Atlanta University.

Information on cooperation among Africanists at the state level is difficult to come by for the Southeast as a whole, but I do have some data on Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina. In each instance the extent of cooperation and communication among Africanists has been relatively limited. Most of the statewide activity in Florida has centered on the African Studies Center at the University of Florida. In 1968, the Center

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sponsored a Conference on African Area Studies that largely drew people teaching in Florida but also attracted some individuals from out of state. One outgrowth of the Conference was participation the following year in a series of faculty development seminars on African history and culture at Bethune-Cookman College (Daytona Beach) which was funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Faculty from the Center have also participated in a conference of social studies teachers in Jacksonville (1970), conferred with faculty from Jacksonville University on developing African courses (1971), and have given individual lectures on various occasions throughout the state. Elsewhere, the University of South Florida began in 1972 to operate a program on behalf of the Florida State University System to send students to Nigeria for limited periods of study.

In North Carolina, recent state-wide curriculum changes that have introduced teaching about Africa and Asia at the seventh and tenth grade levels have created an especially favorable climate for statewide cooperation and communication among Africanists. Last summer, for example, two institutes on Africa for high-school teachers were held in the state, one at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and the other at East Carolina University. North Carolina also seemingly has a higher concentration of Africanists than any other southern state, as indicated by a recent questionnaire sent to Africanists in the Southeast. The questionnaire elicited a total of 143 responses, with 40 (28.0 per cent) coming from North Carolina. The next two states ranked by the number of replies were Florida, with 22 (15.4 per cent) and Georgia, with 21 (14.7 per cent). Some statewide coordination has also taken place in South Carolina. In the mid-60's, for instance, a South Carolina Association of Non-Western Studies was founded,

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but it held its last meeting in 1970. In 1973, the University of South Carolina will hold a summer institute on Africa for high school teachers.

The current level of interest among persons teaching about Africa in the Southeast for organization on a region-wide basis demonstrates a marked contrast to the cooperation and communication that has taken place until recently. Concrete data on the subject comes from a questionnaire prepared by Professors Mark DeLancey (University of South Carolina), Moses Alpan (South Carolina State College), James Brown (Norfolk State College) and Gerald Hartweg (Duke University) and circulated among people teaching about or otherwise interested in Africa at institutions of higher education in the Southeast (for a summary of the answers, see the Appendix). From a distribution of approximately 370 questionnaires, there were 143 replies. The respondents overwhelmingly favored the development of some sort of southeastern organization of Africanists, with 95.1 per cent believing that it would be of value to create such an association and 92.3 per cent replying that they would join in one were organized. Furthermore, 81.1 per cent of the respondents stated that they would be willing to assist in the work of a regional association.

On the basis of the enthusiastic response to the questionnaire, its originators decided to convene an initial meeting of interested persons at the joint annual meeting of the Southern Political Science and International Studies Associations in Atlanta. Consequently, on Friday evening, November 3, 1972, approximately 50 people met to organize a southern association of Africanists. The group included a large number of individuals who came to Atlanta expressly for this evening session and would not have otherwise attended the joint SPSA-ISA meeting. There were several important results

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from this session. First, the participants decided to initiate a regional organization of Africanists along the lines of the Western Association of Africanists. Secondly, they selected an executive committee composed of Professors Akpan, DeLancey, and Hartweg. And third, they charged the executive committee with a set of limited, specific, and attainable goals for the first year of the association: devise a suitable name; determine the necessary interim financial arrangements; inaugurate a newsletter; promote panels on Africa at the regional disicplinary association meetings; begin the search for an institutional home for the organization; convene a meeting next fall to take stock of the organization.

Problems and Possibilities of Regional Cooperation

In considering the second question posed for the panelists -- What are the problems facing closer regional cooperation, and what is the possible role of regional organizations in meeting these problems? -- this paper will first examine the central problem facing Africanists in the South and then turn to a brief consideration of the specific functions that fall within the purview of the fledgling southern association of Africanists. The results of both the spring questionnaire and the concerns voiced by the participants at the Atlanta meeting provide much of the basic information for this section of the paper.

The key obstacle to closer cooperation among Africanists in the Southeast is a sense of isolation. This isolation takes several inter-related forms: geographic, intellectual, and disciplinary. For one thing, Africanists in the Southeast are widely scattered, and aside from a few areas such as Atlanta and Durham-Chapel Hill it is unusual to find a

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concentration of more than a half dozen or so individuals interested in Africa at even the major state universities. A majority of those teaching about Africa find themselves in a situation where there may be only one or two others with related interests on their campus. Furthermore, since there are no leading African Studies centers of the rank of UCLA, Wisconsin, or Boston in the region, such individuals are unable to benefit from a proximity to a major program. Even in places with a slightly higher concentration of African-oriented faculty, the situation is frequently one where there is only an informally organized program with few resources for inviting speakers, providing assistance to graduate students, providing research/travel support, and so forth, and where the library collection is at best a modest one. Also, in these circumstances the individuals concerned are usually the only ones interested in Africa within their particular disciplines. Finally, in common with many other faculty members, Africanists at southern colleges and universities generally come from outside the South and thus find themselves cut off from the surrounding communities in which they live.

For those persons who studied at one of the leading African Studies centers and who are currently faculty members at a major southern university, the sense of isolation is not as keenly felt. They after all have a widespread acquaintance with fellow Africanists in their own and in other disciplines, they have access to publication outlets and to research funding, and they generally can receive adequate support from their present institutions to attend national meetings. The majority, however, do not have such favorable circumstances. For example, faculty members at many institutions are able to and can afford to attend only regional meetings,

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and, as noted above, few of the southern disciplinary associations have exhibited much of an interest in Africa.

Proceeding on the assumption that isolation has been the chief obstacle facing African-oriented faculty members in the Southeast -- in fact this was a predicate for the distribution of the questionnaire last spring -- it would seem that a regional association offers the best means for alleviating this problem. Furthermore, a reduction of this isolation in and of itself would begin to strengthen the position of African Studies in the South. Indeed, on the basis of the positive response to the spring questionnaire and from the sentiments expressed at the November meeting in Atlanta, this would seem to be the consensus of opinion among Africanists in the South. It would, however, be misleading to view a regional association as a panacea or to expect a rapid improvement in communication and cooperation among Africanists in the southern United States as a result of the formation of such an organization. In fact, a number of participants at the Atlanta meeting voiced concern that a regional association would attract the participation of those Africanists who were the least isolated from the general body of African oriented scholars in the United States and that those who were the most isolated would tend to remain outside the reach of a regional association. Evidence in support of this position comes from the fact that a significant percentage of those who were in Atlanta also attended the ASA Meeting in Philiadelphia. On the other hand, there were many at the Atlanta session who could not get to Philadelphia and who would find a regional organization to be their best means of contact with others in the field of African Studies.

The participants in the Atlanta meeting paid considerable attention to

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the functions that the southern association of Africanists should undertake. They assigned first priority to the establishment of a newsletter, since this seemed to be the most practical and the least expensive means of beginning the process of communication and cooperation among Africanists in the region. There was no decision as to the format of the newsletter, but the Western Association of Africanists newsletter serves as a good model. A second projected undertaking is the organization of panels on Africa at the regional disciplinary association meetings. In addition to providing a focal point of interest for Africanists at these meetings, such panels would serve to educate non-African specialists about the current research and teaching on Africa that is going on within their own disciplines. A third function of the southern association for the near future is an annual meeting, probably in conjunction with one of the regional disciplinary associations. While those who met in Atlanta suggested that a meeting not be held during the association's first year, the discussion at the organizational session and the replies to the questionnaire (see Appendix, especially the answers to questions eight and nine) indicate that the interest in an annual meeting is high enough to warrant one. There was also discussion about holding meetings at the state level. In some states, such as North Carolina, Florida, and Georgia this would appear to be feasible, but in most of the remaining southern states there simply are too few faculty members with an interest in Africa to hold a successful meeting.

Once the southern association reaches the stage of becoming a functioning organization, it can reach out into further areas of activity, such as sponsoring summer institutes, promoting the pooling of faculty, students, and resources among institutions at the sub-regional level, and initiating efforts to

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educate the general public about Africa. For the present, however, a limited undertaking that includes a newsletter, panels, and an annual meeting will lay the foundations for communication and cooperational efforts among Africanists at the state and regional levels. Once this is accomplished, then the southern regional association can begin to play an active role in promoting and furthering the study of Africa in the United States.

APPENDIX

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This appendix consists of the results of a questionnaire distributed to African-oriented scholars in the southeastern United States in the spring of 1972. The purpose of the questionnaires was to determine if there was sufficient interest in the region to attempt to organize a Southeastern Association of Africanists. A total of 143 individuals responded. The individuals responsible for distributing the questionnaire and tabulating its results were Professor Mark W. DeLancey, Department of International Studies, University of South Carolina; Professor Moses Akpan, Department of Social Sciences, South Carolina State College; Professor James Brown, Department of History, Norfolk State College; Professor Gerald Hartweg, Department of History, Duke University.

RESPONSES BY STATE

	Responses	Percent
Alabama	2	1.4
D. C.	5	3.5
Florida	22	15.4
Georgia	21	14.7
Kentucky	1	0.7
Louisiana	3	2.1
Maryland	3	2.1
Mississippi	4	2.8
Missouri	4	2.8
North Carolina	40	28.0
South Carolina	13	9.1
Tennessee	8	5.6
Texas	5	3.5
Virginia	11	7.7
Not Ascertained	1	0.7
	143	100.0

QUESTION 2A - Are you currently teaching about Africa?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	100	69.9
No	40	28.8
Not Ascertained	3	2.1

QUESTION 2B - If so, please list courses you are teaching:

	Frequency	Percent
Government and Politics	26	18.2
History	25	17.5
Anthropology	26	18.2
Geography	8	5.6
Sociology	2	1.4
Economics	4	2.8

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Language	4	2.8
Literature	4	2.8
Various	-	-
None	41	28.7
Not Ascertained	3	2.1

QUESTION 3 - If you are not teaching about Africa, do you desire to do so in the future?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	22.4
No	9	6.3
Already teaching	96	67.1
Not Ascertained	5	3.5

QUESTION 4 - Have you traveled or lived in Africa?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	103	72.0
No	39	27.3
Not Ascertained	1	0.7

QUESTION 5 - Do you believe that it would be of value to organize some sort of association of those in the southeast interested in and teaching about Africa?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	136	95.1
No	2	1.4
Not Ascertained	5	3.5

QUESTION 6 - If such an organization were started, would you

A) join it?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	132	92.3
No	4	2.8
Not Ascertained	7	4.9

B) wish to participate in meetings or conferrnces such as an association might hold?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	129	90.2
No	3	2.1
Not Ascertained	11	7.7

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C) be willing to assist in the administrative work necessary to maintain such an organization?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	80	55.9
Yes, with qualifications	36	25.2
No	11	7.7
Not Ascertained	16	11.2

QUESTION 7 - Do you believe that a newsletter or regular, informal publication by such an organization would be of assistance to you in your teaching?

Did respondent answer question?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	131	91.6
No	12	8.4

Did respondent include following (each reply could contain more than one suggestion):

A publication as an outlet for specific information (certain scholarly articles, bibliographical data, electronic media, et cetera) would be of value.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	8	5.6
No	123	86.0
Not Ascertained	12	8.4

Would be of less value than other measures (as conferences, exchange of course syllabi, films, visitors, et cetera).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	2.1
No	128	89.5
Not Ascertained	12	8.4

Yes or possible (to general question).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	104	72.7
No	27	18.9
Not Ascertained	12	8.4

No, newsletter would be of no value, or of doubtful value.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	13	9.1
No	117	81.8
Not Ascertained	13	9.1

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QUESTION 8 - What roles would you wish to see such an organization play? What purposes and interests would you want such an organization to meet?

Did respondent answer question?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	130	90.9
No	13	9.1

Did respondent include the following (each reply could contain more than one suggestion):

Communication with others in the area (includes creation of a cooperative body of African scholarship, a directory of African scholars, et cetera).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	76	53.1
No	53	37.1
Not Ascertained	14	9.8

Educational value (to gain knowledge and information about Africa and its peoples, to educate public about Africa).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	91	63.6
No	38	26.6
Not Ascertained	14	9.8

Teacher's aid value (coordination of library acquisitions, introduction of teaching of Africa to elementary and secondary schools, speical teacher-training programs, a source for development of materials to be used in teaching, exchange of materials and methods, pooling of resources, inter-university exchange of faculty).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	76	53.1
No	53	37.1
Not Ascertained	14	9.8

Value as a research center (joint research and publication).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	35	24.5
No	94	65.7
Not Ascertained	14	9.8

Value as an organizer of special events (organize regional events as art programs, a storehouse of information for upcoming events, sponsor educational tours to Africa, introduction of special interests workshops).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	17	11.9
No	112	78.3
Not Ascertained	14	9.8

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Other:

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	22	15.4
No	107	74.8
Not Ascertained	14	9.8

QUESTION 9 - In what way could such an organization serve your needs (meetings, conferences, publications, et cetera)?

Did respondent answer question?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	114	79.7
No	29	20.3

Did respondent include the following (each reply could contain more than one suggestion):

Communications with others in the area (meeting colleagues, exchange of ideas, faculty directory).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	48	33.6
No	66	46.2
Not Ascertained	29	20.3

Educational value (general knowledge of Africa, educated public, information).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	39	27.3
No	75	52.4
Not Ascertained	29	20.3

Teacher's aid value (resource center, information on teaching trends, exchange of speakers, teacher aid such as audio-visual materials, information on available texts, keep up with expanding materials, exchange teaching methods, exchange of faculty, curriculum exchange, coordination and supply of consultants/speakers, workshops in special areas, pool resources to obtain speakers).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	35	24.5
No	79	55.2
Not Ascertained	29	20.3

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Value as a research center (development of research projects, promote further research).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	13	9.1
No	101	70.6
Not Ascertained	29	20.3

Holding of meetings and conferences (seminar discussion with student participation, presentation of papers).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	70	49.0
No	43	30.0
Not Ascertained	30	21.0

Publications (publication of articles, newsletter, doctoral dissertations, publish a journal).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	56	39.2
No	58	40.6
Not Ascertained	29	20.3

Value as organizer of special events (group study and travel in Africa, travel tours).

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	7.7
No	102	71.3
Not Ascertained	30	21.0

Such an organization would not serve my needs.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	-	-
No	113	79.0
Not Ascertained	30	21.0

Other.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	7.7
No	96	67.1
Not Ascertained	36	25.2

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QUESTION 10 - Any other comments or suggestions you might wish to make?

Did respondent answer question?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	42	29.4
No	5	3.5
Not Ascertained (did not respond)	96	67.1

If the respondent answered, what were his or her additional comments:

Encourage student participation.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	1.4
No	45	31.5
Not Ascertained	96	67.1

Be an organization of academic, not political interest.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	1.4
No	45	31.5
Not Ascertained	96	67.1

Keep organization limited in scope.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	6	4.2
No	41	28.7
Not Ascertained	96	67.1

Hopes for a publication outlet.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	0.7
No	46	32.2
Not Ascertained	96	67.1

Strong interest shown in such an organization.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	14.7
No	26	18.2
Not Ascertained	96	67.1

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Offers of assistance.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	7.7
No	36	25.2
Not Ascertained	96	67.1

Possibility of fund-raising drive for organization and its activities.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	1.4
No	45	31.5
Not Ascertained	96	67.1

Other:

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	14	9.8
No	33	23.1
Not Ascertained	96	67.1

PERCENT IN FAVOR OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF A REGIONAL AFRICAN ASSOCIATION

Enrollment	Willing to assist in admin. work	Publication valuable	Educational value	Aid to teaching	Outlet for publication
Small *	83%	94%	67%	61%	61%
Large	71%	48%	51%	45%	40%

* Small is under 5,000 students.